1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

together, share approximately the same dialect) and differ considerably one from the other as regards social organisation and ritual observances. These differences all occur nevertheless within certain cultural limits, such as the broad lines of megalithic culture which they all share in common and the matrilineal moieties which persist among them despite the overt patrilocal organisation, as well as many linguistic similarities over and above their common Austronesian basis, these similarities occurring most strikingly in the common use of the same, or approximately the same, terms in connexion with megalithic rites, of which the most obvious is their common use of the word Maki.

Of all these languages, that which differs from the others most is that of Vao, not only in vocabulary but also in pronunciation, since, by a peculiar forward movement of the tongue between the lips, certain consonants take on a very un-Malekulan form, making it difficult at first hearing to distinguish between, for example, *t* and *d*, or *m* and *n*. This is most striking to the European in its effect on the consonant which elsewhere in Malekula is pronounced *w* or *v*, and which in Vao sounds like a voiced *th* (*dh*) very similar to the *th* in the English word *the*. Other sound-changes are that Malekulan *g* is softened to *gh* and Malekulan *s* becomes *h*. A notable example is the pronunciation of the word used for the Guardian Ghost, which in Atchin (which retains the Malekulan consonants) is *Le-saw-saw* and in Vao is *Le-hev-hev*, pronounced in a manner that at first hearing I transcribed as *Le-heth-heth*. This sound *th* is characteristic also of certain tribes on Santo. Since all words in which it occurs can, however, be traced to their parallels on Atchin and elsewhere I do not propose to confuse the philological issue by rendering this aberration in print, and wherever this sound occurs in Vao I shall render it by the more usual Malekulan *v*.

From every one of these coral islets may be seen each morning, when the weather is not too stormy, a fleet of small canoes sailing or paddling to the mainland, where the natives of each island have their gardens. For the islets themselves are too small and their soil too shallow to support their population in garden produce, and are, moreover, largely given over to the rearing of pigs, which in their younger stages (before the tusks have appeared and are therefore liable to be damaged if their owners were allowed to run wild) are permitted to forage where they will. It is this habit that has given rise to the French saying that each island is a *parc au porcs*. This is not true if it be understood as meaning that the islands are a mass of wandering pigs; but is true to the extent that no young succulent plant is secure from the occasional ravages of these animals without very heavy fencing to protect it. For this reason the natives have their main gardens on the adjacent mainland, large tracts of which are regarded as the property of the island immediately facing it, and only certain ceremonial gardens surrounded by carefully

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942 0012 Malekula 0012

constructed fences are made on the Small Islands. The daily exodus of canoes to the mainland, after the leisurely taking of the morning meal and when the sun is already high in the sky, is one of the most delightful sights in the whole archipelago. The return takes place during the late afternoon, when each canoe comes back separately, laden with yams [1] wrapped in leafy parcels, bunches of bananas, bread-fruit and other delicacies with which to prepare the evening meal, or towards the festive season, with larger quantities of yams to store on special yam-tables raised above the ground and roofed so that the accumulated food-stuffs may be kept dry.

Since few years pass without some small war breaking out between the various communities inhabiting these islands, it might be thought that their island position would fit them admirably to serve as small fortresses with the sea acting as a surrounding moat. But this is only partially the case, since, as we shall see in the chapter on warfare, the war-making unit is never the island, wars being usually internecine, founded on a standing enmity between two Sides of the same island, and when alliances take place these are with the corresponding Sides of other islands or with certain villages of the adjacent mainland, among all of whom the same dual organisation exists. These wars, however, rarely result in much bloodshed, and are but one aspect of the creative rivalry between otherwise friendly groups on which, as will be seen later, the social organisation of these islands is based.

APPROACH FROM THE SOUTH

If now we approach these islands from the south, whence the patrilineal influence has come and whence also most white men approach them after entering the archipelago at the port of call in the island of Fate some 100 miles to the south, our first introduction to the natural forces that have pushed up the North Central New Hebrides from the ocean bed is the active volcano of Lopevi rising sheer out of the water. Passing to the left of this, the next impressive sight is the large island of Ambrim, crowned by an active crater with innumerable small fissures around it, whence comes the volcanic dust that, mixing with the coral sand and humus of the Small Islands forty miles to the north-west, gives their dancing-grounds the peculiar surface that renders them so soft and firm for dancing, and at the same time is heavy enough not to rise. From the same source come also the currents that sweep in a north-westerly direction up the Malekulan coast, causing certain beaches to have a fine grey sand called "black sand" while others that

[1] Taro, the staple diet on Oba, is not grown here, for lack of terracing and irrigation, but a species, called by the name of *na-mbet*, has recently been introduced as food for pigs.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

woroan discussed in later chapters. This is the nominal form of the verb *wor*, widely used in this part of Melanesia as meaning "to come forth," and in a special sense "to come forth from a woman," and so "to be born." In a more technical sense still, the word *wor* is used in Ambrim as a noun meaning "marriage section," in the sense explained on p. 97, and on Vao the word *woroan* is used in a number of ways, one of which appears to be "matrilineal descent group." [1] It is probably in this sense that the word is used here, for it will be noted that it is the "matrons" of Pete-hul and Togh-vanu who own these special Lodges. In other words, this rather obscure statement appears to indicate that ownership is not in the hands of women born in the village, who all marry elsewhere, but, on the contrary, in those of married women who do *not* belong by birth to the double-village in question. It would appear, both from this and from the fact that "only such women who have been born there [i.e. in this enclosure] have the right of entry," that these Lodges are not patrilineal but matrilineal institutions and represent a survival, despite the existing patrilocal organisation, of the former system of overt matrilineal descent of which traces are still to be found in the terminology of kinship.[2] This supposition is supported by Speiser's report that special houses in which women give birth are found also in the matrilineal islands of Oba and Maewo and in North Raga, but not in the patrilineal districts of South Raga or in Ambrim and Malekula.[3] Such Women's Lodges no longer exist in Atchin, where the matrilineal element in the kinship system is much weaker than it is on Vao.

Gardens

As has already been pointed out,[4] each village possesses its own tracts of land on the mainland of Malekula, where the main gardens are, and to which the natives travel daily in their canoes except during hurricanes and at times of special ritual activity. Each village has its own beach, or section of beach, on Vao, and its corresponding landing-place on the mainland. In addition to the mainland gardens, each village also possesses its share of uninhabited land on Vao. This land, however, like that on all the Small Islands, is largely given over to pigs, which roam around the villages, so that but little cultivation takes place there, and those plots that are used for gardening must be heavily fenced. Exigencies of time did not permit me to make a detailed study of land tenure on Vao, as I did on Atchin, and for all matters dealing with this and with agriculture, the seasons and the calendar, the reader is referred to my forthcoming volumes on that island. There the only gardens made on the Small Island itself are of a ritual nature. All essential cultivation takes place on the Malekulan mainland.

[1] See pp. 133, 138. [2] See p. 126. [3] Speiser, 3, p. 282. [4] See p. 25.

2: Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1936
OO12 Malekula OO12
Small Islands

who had returned to his own people and was busy reviving the fortunes of his village in the same way. These two men were among my best informants, since they themselves were conscious learners from the older men and, like all learners, the most capable of passing on their knowledge.

Nor were the people of Atchin averse to using such aspects of the white man's material culture as would seem to them to further their interests. Though stone tools were still used for gardening and shell tools for carving, some natives possessed knives, but such things were not common, and the degradation in plastic art which everywhere followed on their introduction had, at the time of my visit, only recently begun to show itself. It seemed, by the way, most curious to me that, with the tremendous labour of digging in hard ground with nothing better than hard-wood sticks, no white man had thought of introducing more efficient agricultural implements, but none such existed. The hard-earned white man's money obtained on distant plantations was used almost exclusively with two objects in view. One was the purchase of whaleboats to replace their former long-distance canoes in order to facilitate the trade in and exchange of pigs in other islands. The second, closely connected with it, had as its result the only real benefit conferred by the white man, indirectly and without his knowledge, on the native. When I arrived on Atchin I was surprised at the number of young men who spoke pidgin English. It was not till I had been some time on the island that the reason for this became apparent. One of the least desirable aspects of the social system in this and the neighbouring islands was polygamy which, since most of the older men had two wives, effectually prevented the younger men from marrying until a comparatively late age. Wives are bought with the most valuable currency known in Atchin, namely pigs. So the younger men seized the opportunity created by the system of indentured labour to sign on for three years, without, like other natives, running up debts at the trader's store, so that with the money thus earned they might, on their return, buy pigs with which to purchase wives. This wholly beneficial revolution in the social machinery was in full swing at the time of my visit, but Mr. Harrisson tells me, and this is one of the most interesting points of comparison between then and now, that the old men have now turned tables on the young, and by devaluing the pig in terms of women and increasing the bride-price from eight or nine pigs to fifty or sixty, have thus restored the old equilibrium, and incidentally, presumably, their own authority. When we reflect upon the fact that the young men twenty-two years ago are the older men now we have a useful sidelight on one of the mechanisms governing the rise and fall of revolutions.

Another effect of the increased wealth in pigs thus gained was the elimination of the lower grades from the *Maki* hierarchy. This process was not primarily due to the wealth so gained, but, like so many other changes in native custom, was very much accentuated by it. In all other parts of Malekula the *Maki*, as has already been pointed out, is a graded hierarchy in which the grades are taken by individuals, and the taking of them demands great expenditure of pigs and other forms of wealth, so that when a man has reached the highest grade called *Mal* he is a very great man and jealous of his distinction. The tendency in such districts was consequently to increase the number of pre-

3: Harrisson N-5 (1934-1935) 1936
0012 Malekula 0012
Epi 009

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501
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Tomman Island canoe and long-headed men

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241
137

Clearing for a garden in South Malekula

[facing p. 333]